

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE

held on 7 February 2019
Present:

Cllr D J Bittleston (Chairman)
Cllr A Azad (Vice-Chair)

Cllr A C L Bowes Cllr Mrs B A Hunwicks
Cllr K M Davis Cllr C S Kemp

Also Present: Councillors S Ashall, A-M Barker, J E Bond, M A Bridgeman, I Eastwood, D E Hughes and K Howard.

Absent: Councillor D Harlow.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 13 December 2018 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Harlow and M I Raja.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business under Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, the Leader of the Council, Councillor D J Bittleston, Councillor A Azad, Councillor Mrs B A Hunwicks and Councillor C S Kemp declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute item 7 – General Fund, Service Plans, Budgets and Prudential Indicators 2019-20, minute item 8 – Housing Revenue Account Budgets 2019-20, minute item 9 – Investment Programme 2018-19 to 2022-23, minute item 10 – Capital, Investment and Treasury Management Strategies, minute item 15 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Information and minute item 16 – Monitoring Reports – Projects arising from their positions as Directors of the Thamesway Group of Companies. The interests were such that speaking and voting were permissible.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor D J Bittleston declared an interest in minute item 7 – General Fund, Service Plans, Budgets and Prudential Indicators 2019-20, minute item 9 – Investment Programme 2018-19 to 2022-23, minute item 10 – Capital, Investment and Treasury Management Strategies, minute item 11 – Car Park Management System, minute item 15 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Information and minute item 16 – Monitoring Reports – Projects arising from his position as a Director of Victoria Square Woking Limited. The interest was such that speaking and voting was permissible.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor Mrs B A Hunwicks declared an interest in minute item 16 – Monitoring Reports – Projects arising from her residing in the Gresham Mill area. The interest was not a formal interest under the Members' Code of Conduct so speaking and voting were permissible.

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor I Eastwood declared an interest in minute item 12 – Woking College 3G Artificial Turf Pitch and Pavilion insofar as it referred to Woking Football Club. The interest arised from his holding shares in Woking Football Club. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Deputy Chief Executive, Douglas Spinks, and Head of Democratic and Legal Services, Peter Bryant, declared an interest in minute item 7 – General Fund, Service Plans, Budgets and Prudential Indicators 2019-20, minute item 8 – Housing Revenue Account Budgets 2019-20, minute item 9 – Investment Programme 2018-19 to 2022-23, minute item 10 – Capital, Investment and Treasury Management Strategies, minute item 15 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Information and minute item 16 – Monitoring Reports – Projects arising from their positions as Directors of the Thamesway Group of Companies. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Deputy Chief Executive, Douglas Spinks, and Head of Democratic and Legal Services, Peter Bryant, declared an interest in minute item 7 – General Fund, Service Plans, Budgets and Prudential Indicators 2019-20, minute item 9 – Investment Programme 2018-19 to 2022-23, minute item 10 – Capital, Investment and Treasury Management Strategies, minute item 15 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Information and minute item 16 – Monitoring Reports – Projects arising from their positions as Directors of Woking Necropolis and Mausoleum Limited, Brookwood Park Limited and Brookwood Cemetery Limited. The interests were such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Deputy Chief Executive, Douglas Spinks, declared an interest in minute item 7 – General Fund, Service Plans, Budgets and Prudential Indicators 2019-20, minute item 9 – Investment Programme 2018-19 to 2022-23, minute item 15 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Information and minute item 16 – Monitoring Reports – Projects arising from his position as a Director of Export House Limited. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Head of Democratic and Legal Services, Peter Bryant, and the Finance Director, Leigh Clarke, declared an interest in minute item 7 – General Fund, Service Plans, Budgets and Prudential Indicators 2019-20, minute item 9 – Investment Programme 2018-19 to 2022-23, minute item 10 – Capital, Investment and Treasury Management Strategies, minute item 15 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Information and minute item 16 – Monitoring Reports – Projects arising from their positions as Directors of Dukes Court Owner T S a r l. The interests were such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Head of Democratic and Legal Services, Peter Bryant declared an interest in minute item 12 – Woking College 3G Artificial Turf Pitch and Pavilion insofar as it referred to Woking Football Club. The interest arised from (i) his membership of the Cards Trust and (ii) providing occasional unpaid assistance to Woking Football Club, e.g. acting as Returning Officer at the election of directors. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Finance Director, Leigh Clarke declared an interest in minute item 12 – Woking College 3G Artificial Turf Pitch and Pavilion insofar as it referred to Woking Football Club. The interest arised from her husband having a small shareholding in the Club. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.

5. QUESTIONS

No written questions had been submitted under Section 3 of the Executive Procedure Rules.

6. PETITION - ICE-CREAM VAN IN WOKING PARK EXE19-008

Following consideration by the Council on 6 December 2018 of the petition to reinstate Mr Carlos Ice Cream at Woking Park, the Executive received a report which recommended to Council a response to the petition and formalised arrangements for the future. The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Cultural Services, Councillor Kemp, explained that Officers had been asked to clarify whether the licence to operate with Freedom Leisure provided them with exclusive rights to trade in Woking Park, and also to clarify Freedom Leisure's position on permitting another ice cream vendor to trade in the Park. Councillor Kemp confirmed that the licence with Freedom Leisure did not grant any exclusive rights to trade in the Park that would prevent the Council from granting licences to other food vendors. The Executive was advised that Freedom Leisure had kindly suggested that it would not oppose a suitable position in the Park provided it was not directly in front of the kiosk operated by Freedom Leisure. The Leader thanked Freedom Leisure for their reasonableness in the matter.

Discussion ensued on the length of licence to trade in Woking Park to be offered to Mr Bellanca. The Executive agreed that Mr Bellanca be offered a licence to trade in Woking Park and at Goldworth Park Recreation Ground for 2019 only. In order to provide a fair and equal opportunity for all, it was proposed that a formal process be put in place for interested parties to express an interest in operating mobile food vans at Council owned venues from 2020 onwards.

RECOMMENDED to Council

- That (i) Mr Bellanca be offered a licence to trade in Woking Park at the location identified near to the bandstand from 1 March – 31 October 2019 under the same terms as in previous years;**
- (ii) Mr Bellanca be also offered a licence to trade in Goldsworth Park Recreation Ground from 1 April – 30 September 2019 under the same terms as in previous years; and**

- (iii) **Officers be authorised to review these licence terms and put in place a process for interested parties to express an interest in operating mobile food vans at suitable venues owned by the Council from 2020 onwards.**

Reason: To agree a response to the petition and to formalise arrangements for the future.

7. GENERAL FUND, SERVICE PLANS, BUDGETS AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2019-20 EXE19-001

Councillor Azad, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Financial Planning and Policy, introduced the report outlining the proposed General Fund, Service Plans, Budgets and Prudential Indicators 2019-20. Attention was drawn to a tabled paper which provided information from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on preparations for Brexit, including £35,000 additional funding over two years to all district councils.

The Executive noted that, following the announcement of the final local government settlement on 29 January 2019, the negative Revenue Support Grant (RSG) had been removed which would save the Council £1 million in 2019-20. Councillor Azad highlighted that the levels of government funding from 2020-21 onwards remained uncertain. It was reported that unfortunately the Surrey Business Rate Pilot bid had not been successful.

Councillor Azad reported that the General Fund Budget proposed an increase in Council Tax of 3% for 2019-20 which resulted in a Band D Council Tax figure for 2019-20 of £240.46 or an increase of £7.00 per annum at Band D.

Discussion ensued on new government legislation to encourage empty homes to be brought back into use. The Executive was advised that the Council would be able to charge a long-term empty premium of up to 100% on top of the Council Tax payable for properties empty and substantially unfurnished for two years or more. In addition, it was also proposed that the current Council Tax discount available for vacant properties be reduced from 1 month to 7 days from 1 April 2019. The Portfolio Holder commented that the proposed time reduction would help the flow of properties onto the market. The effect of the proposed change on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Thamesway properties was also raised.

Following a question regarding staffing costs for the Woking Market Team, Officers advised that staffing costs had been offset by income from the Market and that there was no net effect on the budget.

Following a question regarding investment in Brookwood Cemetery, the Executive was informed that once the Council was clear on the future plans for the New Homes Bonus it would be in a better position to agree long term financing plans for the Cemetery.

It was commented that an explanation of the acronyms used regarding land charges in recommendation (v) would be helpful.

RECOMMENDED to Council

- That (i) **the Revenue Estimates and Human Resource requirements for 2019/20 be approved;**
- (ii) **a Band D Council Tax for the Borough of Woking for 2019/20 of £240.46 be approved;**
- (iii) **a long-term empty premium of 100% be added to the Council Tax payable for properties empty and substantially unfurnished for 2 years or more and the exemption available for unfurnished vacant properties be reduced to 7 days;**
- (iv) **the Prudential Indicators at Appendix 3 to the report be approved, subject to any changes arising from consideration of the Investment Programme, revenue budgets and Final Government Settlement;**
- (v) **the Surrey County Council element of the land charges fee be set at £38 plus VAT for Con29R and £19.20 plus VAT for Con29O from 1 April 2019;**
- (vi) **the Finance Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, submit responses to the 'Business Rates Retention Reform' and 'Review of; Local Authorities' Relative Needs and Resources' funding consultations;**
- (vii) **the Service Plans for 2019/20 at Appendix 4 to the report be approved; and**
- (viii) **the Food Safety Plan and Health and Safety Plan at Appendix 4a and 4b to the report be approved.**

Reason: To recommend that Council approves the resources necessary to implement its Service Plans and objectives and raises the necessary revenue through the determination of Council Tax for 2019/20.

8. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGETS 2019-20 EXE19-002

The Executive received the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budgets 2019-20 for recommendation to Council. It was noted that 2019-20 would be a 53 week rent year and would cause an issue with Universal Credit which was paid monthly. The Executive noted that a potential solution was set out in paragraph 4.6 of the report and that further government guidance was expected to clarify the legal position.

Regarding the HRA Borrowing Cap, it was reported that the Leader and Portfolio Holder had recently met with the Housing Minister, Kit Malthouse MP, and they had asked the Minister to consider reducing the Right to Buy on Council housing stock, in return for which the Council would build more Council houses and offer those tenants the Earn Your Deposit Scheme. Members looked forward to hearing the outcome of the meeting in due course.

Following a question regarding Southern Housing Group, it was confirmed that the HRA would be buying Southern Housing Group properties on secured tenancies.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That (i) the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2019/20 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved; and

(ii) with effect from 1 April 2019, rents be increased by 3.4% for Shared Ownership properties and be reduced by 1% for all other tenancies.

Reason: To recommend that the Council approves the resources necessary to implement its objectives and to enable the Council to determine charges to tenants for 2019/20.

9. INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2018-19 TO 2022-23 EXE19-003

The Executive received the Investment Programme 2018-19 to 2022-23 which set out the capital and one off investments required to deliver the Council's key strategies and objectives.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That (i) the Investment Programme 2018/19 to 2022/23 be approved subject to reports on projects where appropriate;

(ii) the proposed financing arrangements be approved; and

(iii) capital and revenue grants for Brookwood Cemetery for 2019/20 and 2020/21 be approved.

Reason: To recommend to the Council that it approves the capital resources for 2018/19 onwards considered necessary to support its service plans and objectives.

10. CAPITAL, INVESTMENT AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES EXE19-005

The Executive received a report which set out the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2019-20 and recommended to Council that the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Strategy be adopted. It was noted that under new requirements for 2019-20 the Council was required to also approve a Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy. Councillor Azad, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Financial Planning and Policy, explained that the new strategies provided detail on how and why the Council undertook investment decisions and provided a more comprehensive and transparent picture of the Council's position and the link with the Council's overall corporate plans and objectives.

The Executive noted that the Council had a principle of investing for better outcomes for Woking citizens and that investment decisions were not solely taken based on rates of return. It was further noted that acquisitions had a strategic purpose with a direct link to Council objectives or services.

Following a question regarding reference to the YPod in the Capital Strategy Report 2019-20, Officers advised that it concerned a change of use within the building and was not a redevelopment of the site.

RESOLVED

That (i) the Treasury Management Strategy set out in the report be approved; and

RECOMMENDED to Council

That (ii) the Capital and Investment Strategies for 2019/20 be approved;

(iii) from 2018/19 the funding of Thamesway Housing Ltd to be amended from the existing combination of loan and shares with an equivalent margin of 1.5% to loan only at 1.5% margin over the Council's borrowing costs; and

(iv) the Treasury Management Prudential Indicators set out in table 1 of Section 4 of the Treasury Management Strategy and the MRP policy set out in Appendix A be approved, subject to any changes arising from consideration of the Investment Programme, revenue budgets and Revenue Support Grant Settlement.

Reason: To determine the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2019/20 and to recommend to Council the Capital and Investment Strategies, Treasury Management Prudential Indicators and MRP Strategy to be adopted.

11. CAR PARK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM EXE19-026

Councillor Kemp, Portfolio Holder for Parking Services, introduced the report which sought approval of the Executive to recommend to Council the proposal to procure new car park management systems. Councillor Kemp spoke in support of the investment and commented that the works to Town Centre car parks would provide an opportunity to introduce the latest technology and make the car parks more flexible. Discussion ensued on Brewery Road and Quadrant Court car parks and it was noted that Officers would consider the new systems which would be of benefit to those sites. The Executive welcomed the proposed investment in the Town Centre.

RECOMMENDED to Council

That (i) the proposal for new car park management systems be agreed with funding from the Council's Investment Programme; and

(ii) the Assistant Director (Place) be delegated authority, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to procure car park management systems through competitive dialogue.

Reason: A decision is sought to invest in the Council's car parking operations and to formally commence the procurement process.

12. WOKING COLLEGE 3G ARTIFICIAL TURF PITCH AND PAVILION EXE19-007

The Executive received a report which sought approval to build a new full size 3G Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) and a new Pavilion at Woking College. It was explained that the need for the project had arisen following the completion of the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy in 2017 which had identified the lack of suitable training and playing facilities for football in Woking. Councillor Kemp, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Cultural Services, reported that the facility would be managed by Cardinals in the Community which was an organisation with experience of delivering football in the community and wider community development initiatives. It was noted that the project costs set out in the resolve were maximum amounts and that the borrowing would be reduced if grant applications were successful.

Following a question it was confirmed that Woking Academy would be one of the clients to use the facilities.

The Executive welcomed the report and the community benefits that the project aimed to achieve.

RESOLVED

- That (i) the development of the Woking College 3G Football Artificial Turf Pitch and pavilion project in the sum of £2,049,330 be approved;
- (ii) financing for the project from £772,826 of the S.106 equivalent contribution from the Moor Lane Private Finance Project, Grant Contributions, if secured, of up to £614,000 with the balance financed from borrowing up to a maximum of £1,266,000 be approved;
- (iii) the Council enters into a lease with Woking College for the site of the 3G Football Artificial Turf Pitch and pavilion, on terms approved by the Head of Democratic and Legal Services, and to grant a sub lease to Cardinals in the Community on similar terms to administer the facility on its behalf;
- (iv) the Council enters into a construction contract with an approved contractor for the creation and erection of the 3G Football Artificial Turf Pitch and pavilion; and
- (v) the Council enters into all ancillary agreements and consents and takes all appropriate actions considered necessary by the Head of Democratic and Legal Services to give effect to these resolutions and the conditions set out in Planning Permission which was granted on 28 March 2017 [15/0632].

Reason: A decision is sought to allow the Woking College 3G Football Artificial Turf Pitch project to be implemented.

13. CITIZENS ADVICE WOKING - BUSINESS PLAN EXE19-009

Following consideration of an application for financial assistance from Citizens Advice Woking at the Executive on 13 December 2018, the Executive agreed that Citizens Advice Woking be asked to prepare a Business Plan setting out how it would work more effectively with the Council. The Leader drew attention to an updated and more detailed action plan which had been tabled at the meeting.

The Leader advised that, given the significant level of support provided by the Council to Citizens Advice Woking, there was a need for oversight in order to ensure that the Council was achieving value for money. The Leader suggested that such oversight could be achieved by an annual briefing to Members from Citizens Advice Woking or could be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Barker commented that this would not be appropriate.

In order to allow time for Citizens Advice Woking to work with the Council in a collaborative way, the Leader stated that an update against the Business Plan would be received by the Executive at its meeting on 12 September 2019, and not at the March Executive as originally planned.

RESOLVED

That the action plan be approved.

Reason: To further strengthen relationships between Citizens Advice Woking and Woking Borough Council.

14. WOKING BLACKHAWKS BASKETBALL CLUB - APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE EXE18-081

The Executive received a grant request from Woking Blackhawks Basketball Club towards the cost of updating its website. Councillor Davis advised that, following research, the level of funding requested was acceptable for what the Club intended to achieve with its new website and Councillor Davis recommended that the grant be approved.

RESOLVED

That funding of up to a maximum of £7,500 be agreed from the Council's Community Fund towards the new website costs for the Woking Blackhawks Basketball Club for 2019/20.

Reason: To enable the Club to attract new members by improving the accessibility of its website.

15. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING INFORMATION

The Executive considered the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book), December 2018. Discussion ensued on page 16 of the Green Book regarding Members and staff training. It was noted that the Council was currently working with an external organisation to undertake a comprehensive learning and development programme for Senior Managers and Executive Members. The Leader commented that if the training for members of the Executive proved successful and added value then it would be looked to roll-out to the Shadow Executive Members.

Following a question regarding parking income on page 18 of the Green Book, it was noted that Officers would monitor the situation closely. Members were reminded to put out the message that the Town was open for business and that there were car parking spaces available.

RESOLVED

That the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information, December 2018, be received.

Reason: To manage the performance of the Council.

16. MONITORING REPORTS - PROJECTS EXE19-004

The Executive received a quarterly monitoring report on the progress of projects in the interest of financial prudence and to ensure open and transparent corporate governance. Regarding Project No. 10206 – Playground Improvements Phase 4, the Portfolio Holder advised that the final four play areas due some refurbishment work in the current year were Horsell Moor, Loop Road, Oakfield and Sutton Green. It was noted that it was a rolling programme of improvements and that Officers were working on a new Play Strategy going forward.

Regarding Project No. 10923 – Woking Park Play Area, the Executive was advised that the project had not been closed due to ground works and flooding issues. The Portfolio Holder commented that it was hoped that the issues would be resolved soon.

Regarding Project No. 20146 – Leisure Lagoon Modernisation, it was reported that work was ongoing on the replacement flumes and concrete repairs and it was hoped that the new flumes would be operational for Easter.

Regarding Project No. 20140 – Woking Gateway, the Executive was informed that the decision to increase the launch spend was taken by the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Executive and Portfolio Holder, as Woking Gateway provided a key opportunity to promote the Town at the MIPIM exhibition. The Executive was advised that the initiative had been very successful as it had generated interest from the property and development industry as well as securing agreement to the Gateway site.

RESOLVED

That the report be received.

Reason: To monitor the position of active projects on SharePoint.

<p>This document was published on Friday, 8 February 2018 and the decisions within it will be implemented on Monday, 18 February 2018, subject to call-in.</p>

The meeting commenced at 7.30 pm and ended at 8.56 pm.

Chairman: _____

Date: _____